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ARMS BUILD UP IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND THE GULF



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ments East of Suez - in Hong Kong, Singapore and Oman - and to reconsider both its use of the Simons-town base in South Africa and of the Diego Garcia island, shared with the USA. An element of this is pure deception: it has long been customary for Labour Party governments to make anti-imperialist noises while placing the Ministry of Defense in the hands of right-wing members of that Party. And the 1974 government has been no exception. But, as with other British retreats, there is reason to expect that financial contradiction above all else will exert pressure for British savings in this sphere. France too, which retains naval bases and colonies (djibouti, the Comores Islands, Reunion) in the Ocean, has also been reluctant to collaborate with the USA: but it is pursuing its own imperialist policy while continuing its inter-imperialist dispute with the "Anglo-Saxons".

Most serious for imperialism is the fact that two of its major bastions on the African continent have recently collapsed. Since the 25 April 1974 coup in Portugal, Lisbon has been preparing to withdraw from Africa, and this will, to some extent, inevitably weaken the imperialist presence in the Indian Ocean. An independent Mozambique will open up a new flank against Rhodesia and South Africa, and whatever the ultimate political complexion of that state it will not provide military bases for NATO. On the other side of Africa a separate but related problem is posed by the future of the Cape Verde Islands. These lie aside the round-Africa shipping route, linking Europe and the Gulf: if and when they join the new Republic of Guinea-Bissau the imperialist conception of naval security will suffer a further blow. The second bastion that has fallen is Ethiopia, although the political implications of this change are still obscure. Since 1945 Ethiopia received over one third of all US military aid to Africa: it was the seat of the US "communications" i.e. electronic espionage centre at Asmara and acted as a counter-revolutionary diplomatic influence through its patronage of the

Organisation of African Unity. The fall of Haile Selassie has undermined this arrangement and released powerful social and political forces inside Ethiopian society: whatever the outcome here, it is unlikely that in the near future Ethiopia will serve pro-imperialist functions as it did before the recent revolt.

THE INTERESTS OF IMPERIALISM.

Imperialist interests in the Indian Ocean can be divided into four, general categories:

1. SHIPPING LANES:

Since the closure of the Suez Canal in 1967 all of the Gulf's oil, which provides over 50% of Europe's needs, has gone around the African coast. This has raised total trade along this route to 15,000 ships per year, while oil makes up about 10% of the total world bulk shipped per year, it comprises 50% of total value shipped. When the Suez Canal is re-opened, tankers of up to 200,000 tons will be able to use it when empty. The tendency now is to build tankers larger than either of these two figures - up to 400,000 and 500,000 tons. But even though some tankers will still go around the Cape to Europe, every ship that goes through the Canal will also pass through part of the Indian Ocean.

2. ON - LAND RESOURCES:

The Gulf is the site of 70% of the world's oil. Neither North Sea / Scottish Oil, in Europe, nor "Project Independence" in the USA, will diminish the overall importance of this oil in the final quarter of the century. In Southern Africa there are also important mineral resources (gold, copper, diamonds); and it can be expected that imperialism will try to elbow its way into the newly independent states of Angola (where there is oil) and Mozambique.

3. STRATEGIC CONCERNS:

The Ocean adjoins two of the three continents formerly ruled by imperialism, and is today one of the major areas of inter-imperialist contradiction, and of contradiction between the United States and the Soviet Union. Any change in the balance of forces in the area affects imperialist strategy as a whole; in particular, as long as the United States sees its task as that of rivalling and trying to reduce the foreign policy activities of the Soviet Union and its allies, the Indian Ocean will be the scene of manoeuvring for strategic advantage.

4. COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY VIGILANCE:

Any revolution in the post-colonial world poses some threat to US imperialism, and to its junior partners in Japan and Europe. Three kinds of local threat exist in the Indian Ocean. First, there is the small group of anti-imperialist states, Tanzania, The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, and Somalia: within the limits of their strength, they have tried to lessen and counter imperialist activities in the region. Secondly, there are the guerrilla movements that have been fighting for some years in countries around the Ocean's rim - in Mozambique, in the Eritrean province of Ethiopia, and in Oman. Thirdly, there have been several popular uprisings in Indian Ocean states - in Pakistan (1969-1971), in Sri Lanka (April-May 1971), in the southern, Tulear, province of Madagascar (March 1971) and in Ethiopia. All indicate instability in the capitalist countries now bordering the Ocean.

DIRECT IMPERIALIST ACTIVITY.

The global policy of the US in the 1970s has reflected a shift from direct to indirect controls - as exemplified in Vietnamisation. But the relative reduction of imperialist military bases on land

has been compensated by an increase in the US's strategic mobility. Greater emphasis is laid on air and sea movement, and on maintaining supply bases in remote areas: while out of sight of angry populations, they will serve as the basis for deploying troops in crises and for backing up neo-colonial regimes that may be in difficulties. A basic thesis of US preparedness today is that they are able to establish a large air and troop base anywhere in the world within 24 hours, provided only that water is locally available. The new US navy is based on such a conception of rapid strategic mobility and support for ground troops.

In the Indian Ocean the US has been prompted both by the relative reduction in the British military presence, and by the fact that its hand has been freer as a result of the reduction of overt US military activity in Indochina. When the British withdrew from permanent occupation of Bahrain in 1971 the US arranged to lease the al-Jufair naval base from the Bahrain government: and although the Bahrain regime pretended to cancel this during the Arab-Israeli October War no such cancellation was enforced. In the Sultanate of Oman the main role has been played by Britain and Iran but the US military authorities are carrying out naval surveillance, under the cover of a US-owned fishing fleet named Mardela.

Direct US presence has centred on the question of expanding the naval base and air facilities on the island of Diego Garcia. This island, 1,200 miles south-west of India, is part of an atoll ruled by Britain: the British Indian Ocean Territory. According to the one-time US Commander in Chief, Pacific, Admiral John S. McCain: "As Malta is to the Mediterranean, Diego Garcia is to the Indian Ocean." In 1966-1970 the US spent \$19 millions on establishing a communications base there, with an alleged staff of 200 personnel. Then at the end of 1973

the US military requested an additional \$29 millions to expand the runway from 8,000 to 12,000 feet and to build a naval centre there. The reason they gave was that Soviet naval activities in the Indian Ocean were increasing. In fact, the US had another reason for wanting to intensify its presence on the island - fear of the revolutionary movements in the area. During the Arab-Israeli war of October 1973 ships of the US Seventh Fleet had sped to the mouth of the Red Sea, and Phantom jets from aircraft carriers had buzzed planes coming in to land at Aden Airport.

In requesting the additional military aid, Admiral Thomas Moorer, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated that the base was needed to protect supply lines running from the area and to the area. These, he said, involved the interests of Japan "and other allies of America". The expansion of the runway would enable KC135 oil tanker planes to use the bases: these are used for refuelling B-52 bombers, and the island itself could be used for the same purpose. Diego Garcia is neatly situated for optimal coverage of all likely targets: bombers flying from there could hit both Aden and Hanoi.

The US's other allies have until recently co-operated in this policy. The Conservative government in Britain which lasted from June 1970 to February 1974 was constantly stressing the dangers of the "Soviet" naval presence in the Indian Ocean. They increased the British commitment to the Simons-town base in South Africa, and pursued the counter-revolutionary war in Oman. Despite the formal withdrawal from East of Suez in 1971 British bases remained, and British troops still exercised and used facilities in Malaysia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Iran and Kenya. On the south-east flank of the Ocean lies Australia: not only does the US maintain a communications base there, the link with Diego Garcia, but the Canberra government has been pioneering a counter-revolutionary tri-

angular alliance with Tokyo and Jakarta.

The other part of the new imperialist policy is the buildup of powerful local states, able to protect capitalist interests and play the role once played by the imperialist armies themselves. Where these states have large revenues from oil, such buildups also serve to boost the exports of the advanced capitalist countries by massive arms sales. In general this system involves the establishment of active, intermediate, military powers, and this is most evident in the centre of imperialist preoccupation within the Indian Ocean region - the oil-rich Gulf.

VIETNAMISATION IN ARABIA.

Fighting by proxy is the key to the Nixon doctrine, as exemplified in Vietnamisation. In Indochina Thai troops have been used to play the role once filled by GIs; in Latin America Brazilian domination of its neighbours has upheld or instigated military regimes in Uruguay, Bolivia and Chile. In the Gulf area, the two states chosen are Iran and Saudi Arabia, today the two largest US arms clients in the world. In a limited sense, there is nothing new in this policy of a major imperialist country delegating repressive functions to soldiers from a more or less dependent country. Throughout the period of their Empire, the British used "native troops" to garrison their dominions and fight "dirty" wars for them. Much of the most brutal counter-revolutionary fighting in the Napoleonic wars and elsewhere was done by Irish troops. Indian forces were used not only to garrison the sub-continent but were also deployed internationally against revolutionary movements in Russia (1919-1920), Greece (1944-1945) and Vietnam (1945). Most of the troops sent to Oman until 1947 were Indian.

The Kennedy-MacNamara limited war strategy in the

early 1960s was centred on training third world armies to counter internal subversion, while the US military provided advice and technique. US troops were to be sent in only when all else failed. In this sense the massive commitment of ground troops to Vietnam was an exception, and "Vietnamisation" the allegedly new policy is a return to an older style.

The difference between what is now called "sub-imperialism" and these earlier British and US strategies lies not so much in the military as in the political and economic spheres: Brazil, Iran, even Thailand are more politically independent and economically more autonomous than were either the colonies of the British empire or the shaky neo-colonial states of the early 1960s. In the military sphere the relationship has also altered. Its core has been well described by Nixon's first term Defense Secretary, Melvin Laird:

"Each partner does its share and contributes what it best can to the common effort. In the majority of cases, this means indigenous manpower organised into properly equipped and well-trained armed forces with the help of material, training, technology and specialised skills furnished by the United States."

This is exactly what has happened in Arabia. Although the USA has provided military assistance to Saudi Arabia since the 1940s, this has taken on new dimensions in the past decade and especially since the oil boom in the late 1960s. When the 1973 crisis was over, a series of military deals followed: \$850 millions were to be spent on US equipment for the Saudi navy; \$335 millions on re-equipping the Saudi National Guard with armoured cars, 105 howitzers and anti-tank weapons; and \$270 millions on air defense missiles designed "to protect the holy places" - according to Saudi minister of Defense and Aviation Amir Sultan.

Most important of all was a long-term economic and military agreement estimated at \$3,000 millions, under which the US would "assist" the Saudis to transform their economy and armed forces.

In October 1974 two important US officials visited Saudi Arabia: CIA director William Colby, and Assistant Defense Secretary for International Security Affairs, Robert Ellsworth. Their visits were both part of the massive US military buildup of the Saudi Armed forces, details of which were leaked to the US press at the same time. A State Department memo of 16 September 1974 detailed a comprehensive plan for rebuilding the Saudi Armed Forces until 1984 (International Herald Tribune, 28 October 1974). The aim was to provide the Saudi government with "the capabilities 1) to deter aggression; 2) defeat an enemy...3) assist in maintaining internal order and security; 4) contribute to the Saudi Arabian Government's moderating role in the Middle East."

Saudi Arabia, however, is not the only state to be involved. In 1971 Kuwait was made eligible for military sales, and in 1973 the five remaining capitalist states in Arabia - North Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates - were also included. Following visits by a US military mission to Kuwait in 1972 and in 1973 the Kuwaitis announced plans to purchase \$500 millions worth of arms from the US.

The principles followed in all cases are those laid down by Laird; in so far as is possible the active personnel have been local - not only has this avoided the political problems involved in sending in ground troops but it has also accorded more with the increased strength of the oil producing states.

IRAN: THE LARGEST GENDARME.

In Iran the policy has gone furthest of all, and

Iran today is the strongest power in the whole Gulf. Inside the country the SAVAK, modelled along US police and FBI lines, has been an efficient repressor of all opposition - a torturing and crushing device as efficient as its fellow organizations in South Vietnam and Brazil. Between 1950 and 1972 Iran received \$837 millions in US military aid, a high sum for the time. Beginning in 1965 and up to the end of 1973 fiscal year Iran purchased around \$3.7 billions in further equipment - a sharp rise which turned Iran into the gendarme of the region. In 1974 the Shah purchased 80 F-14 jet fighters, and bailed out the manufacturer of the plane, Grummans, with a massive loan. He also bought 209 phantom jets, 500 attack helicopters, 700 tanks and 6 destroyers. Iran has become by far the largest purchaser of arms in the world. Not content with crushing his own people, the Shah has gone on to menace his neighbours. He has sent counter-insurgency forces to Oman and military advisers to North Yemen. In a meaningful extension of its counter-revolutionary role Iran has come to the aid of the USA in Indochina. Iran, along with Taiwan and South Korea sent jets to bolster Saigon's defenses in November 1972.

Iran has also maintained a close, if semi-secret, co-operation with Israel. Iran has been providing all of Israel's oil needs for some years and has also been shipping oil to Europe via the Eilat pipeline. At the same time the Israeli intelligence service - Mossad and Shinbet - have been co-operating with the SAVAK in the exchange of information about Arab states and about revolutionary movements that are opposed to both countries (Newsweek 14 October 1974). It is also known that after the 1967 war, Israel sold or gave to Iran quantities of Russian arms captured from the Egyptians in Sinai, and these were subsequently given by the Iranians to forces they supported - including the North Yemeni army. All in all, Iran has been turned into the major military force in the Gulf: not only does

it dominate the waters of the Gulf, and provide military aid to Arab states, but it is also now expanding into the Indian Ocean. Its base at Chah Bahar, outside the mouth of the Gulf, is designed for patrolling the northern Indian Ocean, and it has also acquired naval facilities on the island of Mauritius several thousand miles to the south. This change has been made possible by the military supplies given by the USA.

US JUSTIFICATIONS.

This flow of arms to the Gulf involved not only the reinforcement of "stability" in the area, but also a boost to US exports and to US arms firms, who - along with their British and French counterparts - have taken full advantage of the opportunity.

At times the volume of this expenditure has raised certain questions in the US Congress, especially when in mid-1973 the Saudis, Kuwaitis and Iranians started to request F-4 Phantom jets. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Joseph J. Sisco, justified the sale of Phantoms to Saudi Arabia on the grounds that there existed a threat to this country:

"Mr. Chairman", he testified, "as the states in the Gulf and the peninsula have taken on more responsibilities for their economic destiny, they, too, have become increasingly aware of threats they see to their security and of the need to improve their defensive capacity. These concerns have intensified as a result of the conflict between South and North Yemen last September, the continuing insurrection in Oman's Dhofar province which has its base of support in South Yemen, the arrest in recent months in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Oman of a number of members of the subversive South-Yemeni supported Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arab Gulf (PFLOAG), the increasing supply of Soviet arms equipment, and

technicians to South Yemen and to Iraq, the March 20 border skirmish between Iraq and Kuwait, and the March 22 attack by South Yemeni aircraft on a Saudi border outpost."

"One of the principal US policies in the Gulf since the British announced in 1968 their intention to end their protective treaty relationships there has been to encourage friendly states in the area to assume increasing responsibility for collective security in the region. In the Gulf, this has been shared primarily by Iran and Saudi Arabia...Elsewhere in the peninsula Saudi Arabia now bears the primary responsibility".

In further elaboration Sisco stressed the danger of Soviet influence in the area, and argued that the Israelis need not fear the Saudi weapons. The Saudis were, he said "looking south, not north". Under questioning, a number of problems arose. First, it transpired that the volume of US arms sales to the region was between five and six times that of Soviet sales; moreover that while the range of the Phantom is 1,000 miles that of the Mig-21, the plane the Russians supplied to South Yemen and Iraq, is 400 miles: this means that the Saudis would be able to bomb Aden and Baghdad, while neither the South Yemenis nor the Iraqis could reach Saudi cities or the main Saudi oilfields. Other, even more relevant qualifications, were not brought up at all. The "March 20 border incident" appeared to be all too convenient for the Saudis as it provided justification for their arms request, and indeed this clash had been provoked not by South Yemen but by Saudi Arabia in order to produce a sense of crisis in the region - a Tonking Gulf incident in the heart of the Arabian desert. Nor did anyone question Sisco's version of the September 1972 inter-Yemeni war - which was a deliberate attempt by US - supported forces to topple the Aden government. It is true that the PDRY and PFLO oppose the regimes of the Gulf: this is because of the political

character of these regimes. It is also true that the Soviet Union supports the PDRY and PFLO: but the Soviet Union did not create the conditions in which the Arabian revolutionaries are fighting - these were created and are maintained by the USA, Britain and their local allies. Moreover it is absurd to think that the PDRY with a small army and smaller airforce could constitute any military threat to the Saudis: in this respect, as in the others detailed here, Sisco's picture was a distortion designed to justify arms supplies to the aggressive Riyadh regime. The US buildup in Arabia and the Gulf has, therefore, ominous similarities with US policies in other regions where "incidents" and "foreign threats" are being used to justify a massive counter-revolutionary intervention. The reason for all this concern is above all oil.

CONCLUSION.

The changes recently seen in imperialist policy in the Ocean and the possible defections from a united imperialist line (whether by Portugal or a Labour regime in Britain) cannot detract from its central aspect: the establishment of a strong axis tying the USA to local sub-imperialist powers in the Ocean itself. Moreover, however much they talk about a Russian threat, the real danger they fear is revolution in the countries of the region, whether in Africa, the Indian sub-continent or the Arabian peninsula, and despite the enormous buildup of arms, the Pentagon planners must be alarmed by what they see occurring all around the rim of this region: from Mozambique in the South-west, through Ethiopia and Oman, to the continued war in Indochina there runs a red line of mass struggle.

A P P E N D I X

MILITARY FORCES OF IRAN, KUWAIT, OMAN AND SAUDI ARABIA. Taken from the Military Balance 1974-1975, published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

IRAN

Population: 32,215,000.
Military Service: 2 years.
Total armed forces: 238,000.
Estimated GNP 1973: \$22.5 billion.
Defence expenditure 1974-1975: 215,100 million rials (\$3,225 million).

ARMY: 175,000.
3 armoured divisions.
2 infantry divisions.
4 indep bdes (2 inf, 1AB, 1 special force).
1 SAM battalion with HAWK.
300 Chieftain, 400 M-47 and 460 M-60A1 med tks; about 2,000 M-113, BTR-50 and BTR-60 APC; 130 and 155mm guns; 600 75mm, 105mm, 155mm, 203mm how, 175mm SP guns and 203mm SP how; 64 BM-21 RL; SS-11, SS-12, TOW ATGW; 23mm, 40mm, 57mm and 85mm AA guns; HAWK SAM; (480 Chieftain med, 250 Scorpion lt tks; 155mm SP guns and ZSU-23-4 SP AA guns on order).
Ac include C-45, Li-8, 45 Cessna 185, 10 O-2A, 6 Cessna 310. 20 Huskie, 24 AB-206A and 14 CH-47C Hel (52 AB-205A on order).

DEPLOYMENT: Oman 1,500, 1 para bn, 1 hel sqn.

RESERVES: 300,000.

NAVY: 13,000.
3 destroyers.
4 frigates with Mk2 Seakiller SSM and Seacat SAM.
4 corvettes.

10 patrol boats (3 under 100 tons)
6 minesweepers (4 coastal).
4 landing craft.
8SRN-6 and 2 Wellington BH-N7 hovercraft.
4 AB-205A, 14 AB-206A, 6AB-212, 10 SH-3D hel.
(6 FPB, 2 BH-N7 hovercraft, 6 P-3 Orion MR ac on order).

AIR FORCE: 50,000; 216 combat aircraft.
6 FB sqns with 32 F-AD, 64 F-4E with Sidewinder and Sparrow AAM.
6 FB sqns with 100 F-5A.
2 recce sqns with 4 RF-4E, 16 RF-5A.
6 med tpt sqns with 60 C-130E/H. 21t tpt sqns with 12 F-27, 6 C-54, C-47, 12 Huskie, 5 AB-206A, 5 AB-212, 4 CH-47C hel. and 5 Beaver.
Trainers incl 30 T-41, 30 T-33, T-6.
Rapier and Tigercat SAM.
(80 F-14 Tomcat, 70 F-4E, 141 F-5E, 4 F-28, 6 707-320C tankers, 22 CH-47C, 287 UH-1H/214A Huey Plus, Blindfire SAM radar on order).

Para-Military Forces: 70,000 Gendarmerie with lt ac and hel; 40 patrol boats.

KUWAIT.

Population: 1,100,000.
Military Service: conscription.
Total armed forces: 10,200.
Estimated GNP 1973: \$4.7 billion.
Defence expenditure 1974: 47 million dinars (\$162 million).

ARMY: 8,000.
1 armoured brigade.
2 composite brigades (armour/infantry/artillery).
50 Vickers and 50 Centurion med tks- 250 Saladin, Saracen, Ferret armd cars; 10 25-pdr guns; 20 155mm how; Vigilant ATGW.

NAVY: 200 (Coastguard).
10 78 foot patrol boats.
8 patrol launches.
2 landing craft.

AIR FORCE: 2,000; 28 combat aircraft.
12 Lightning F-53 interceptors.
4 Hunter FGA-57 fighters.
12 BAC-167 Strikemaster COIN aircraft.
2 Caribou, 1 Argosy, 1 Devon, 2 Lockheed L-100-20 transports.
6 AB-204B, 1 Whirlwind hel.
2 Lightning T-55, 2 Hunter T-67 and 6 Jet Provost T-51 trainers.
(20 Mirage F1, some 20 Gazelle and 10 Puma hel on order).

OMAN.

Population: 740,000.
Total armed forces: 9,700 (including some 600 expatriate personnel of several nationalities, serving on contract or on secondment).
Defence budget 1974: 58.5 million rial saidi (\$169 million).

ARMY: 9,000.
4 infantry battalions.
1 frontier force battalion.
1 armoured cavalry squadron.
1 artillery regiment.
1 signals regiment.
Saladin, V-100 Commando, Ferret armoured cars;
75mm packhow; 25-pdr and 5.5 inch guns.

NAVY: 200
3 fast patrol boats.
3 armed motorized dhows.
1 patrol vessel (yacht).

AIR FORCE: 500 (including 160 contract personnel;
12 combat aircraft).

1 FGA squadron with 12 BAC-167 (4 on order).
1 Air support squadron with 4 Caribou, 10 Skyvan and 4 Beaver (6 Skyvan on order).
1 hel sqn with 10 AB-205 and 4 AB-206A (3 AB-205A on loan from Iran, 10 on order).
1 transport flight with 5 Viscount (8 BN Defender and 3 BAC-111 to be delivered in 1974).

Para-military forces: 2,000; 1,000 gendarmerie (2 battalions), 1,000 tribal Home Guard.

SAUDI ARABIA.

Population: 8,670,000.
Military Service: voluntary.
Total armed forces: 43,000.
Estimated GNP 1973: \$6.8 billion.
Defence expenditure 1974-1975: 6,400 million rial saidi (\$1,808 million).

ARMY: 36,000.
4 infantry brigades.
1 armoured battalion.
2 reconnaissance battalions.
1 parachute battalion.
1 Royal Guard battalion.
3 artillery battalions.
3 AA battalions.
10 SAM batteries with HAWK.
30 AMX-30, 25 M-47 med tks; 60 M-41 lt tks; 200 AML-60 and AML-90, some Staghound and Greyhound armd cars; Ferret scout cars; field guns; AA guns; HAWK SAM, (150 AMX-30, Scorpion, Fox and Improved HAWK on order).

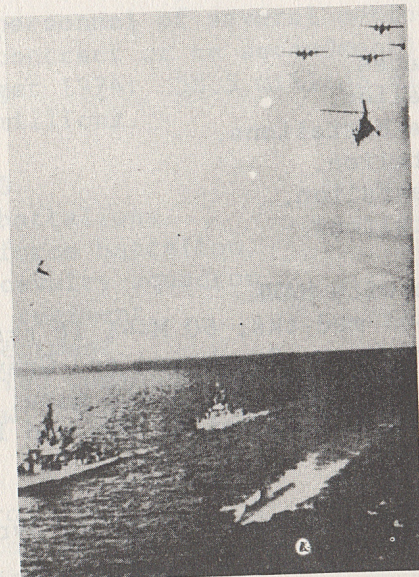
DEPLOYMENT: 4,000 in Jordan, 1,500 in Syria.

NAVY: 1,500.
4 FPB (Jaguar-class).

20 patrol boats (coastguard).
8 SRN-6 Hovercraft (coastguard).

AIR FORCE: 5,500; 90 combat aircraft.
2 FB sqns with 14 F-5E and 20 F-5B.
2 FGA sqns with 21 BAC-167.
2 interceptor sqns with 35 F-52/F-53 Lightning.
2 tpt sqns with 9 C-130H and 2 C-140B.
2 hel sqns with 20 AB-206 and 10 AB-205.
Other ac incl 3 Lightning T-55, 1 T-33 trainer,
1 Cessna 310K and 6 172G lt ac; 6 Alouette 111,
1 AB-204 hel.
37 Thunderbird Mk 1 SAM.
(126 F-5E/B, 38 Mirage 111ESA, 9 BAC-167, 12 KC-130
on order).

Para-military forces: 26,000 National Guard (for-
merly known as the "White Army" organised into
regular and semi-regular battalions: 6,500
Coastguard and Frontier Force).



A D D E N D U M

The key to the importance of the Gulf area is oil. At present, western Europe relies on the Gulf to provide three-fourths of its oil and Japan depends on the Gulf for 90% of its needs. India, Pakistan, Israel, Australia and New Zealand are also dependent on the Gulf reserves. It is estimated by 1980 the US will import 55% of its oil from the Gulf. Oil revenues have made substantial contributions to the economies of the US and Britain. In terms of favorable exchange balances, US oil companies in the Gulf area accounted for over a billion dollars annually--without these dollars, US balance of payments deficits would have been much greater than they have been in recent years. Also the British pound would have faced drastic devaluation if Kuwaiti deposits in London bank accounts were withdrawn. The Gulf, as an area which as Sisco says is developing "from poverty to a number of areas of affluence", offers a vast untapped market for dumping US goods, particularly military hardware and services. The region has become vital to the maintenance of the war economy of the US. "Both Defense and State Department officials emphasized that...the deal (\$3 billion dollar defense contract just arranged by the Pentagon with Iran) was entered into because it will be highly profitable to the US in helping American arms manufacturers caught in a post-Vietnam slump in orders and in helping to redress the US balance of payments deficit" (N.Y. Times, February 23). In addition, the Gulf is part of a series of waterways including the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean which together provide easy access to the continents of Asia, Africa and Europe. Control of these waterways assures access to the third world continents whose raw materials, cheap labor and vast markets are the lifeblood of imperialism. For the imperialists control of this area is essential. They will make any bargain and do any deed to secure it for themselves.

The revolutionary movements in the Gulf pose a serious threat to their control and rule. The revolution in Dhofar, a province of Oman, was lead by the People's Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf until 1971 when it joined with the National Democratic Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf under the name of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG), and the two invited all the anti-imperialist forces in the Gulf to join them. Under this leadership the revolution has continuously foiled all reactionary attempts to crush it and has successfully liberated 70% of Dhofar. At present, the revolution has inspired the masses throughout the Gulf to take up the struggle. Massive strikes and demonstrations have engulfed the area over the last several years, particularly in Kuwait, Bahrain and Iran. The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, is another "danger spot" for the imperialists. Since its liberation in 1967, Democratic Yemen has provided the main source of support and military aid to both the revolution in the Gulf and the Palestinian Revolution. Henry Kissinger's remarks about military action to prevent economic stangulation were directed at the PFLOAG. It is his belief that their control of Oman would threaten the Strait of Hormuz, the strait through which oil tankers carry more than half of the West's oil supply.

To stop this threat the imperialists have created gendarmes in the Middle East namely Iran and Saudi Arabia. Given the task of securing the area for the imperialists both Saudi Arabia and Iran have embarked on a massive arms buildup. Iran spent \$7.6 billion in the US alone acquiring one of the world's most modern arsenals. The Shah's air force will soon add the Grumman F-14 Tomcat Mach 2.3 fighter to its fleet of 60 F-5s and 200 F-4 Phantoms (with another 200 ordered), not to mention eight tankers for inflight refueling. Iran's army boasts

about 3,000 armored vehicles and has more than 1,000 helicopters, including the American made SeaCobra attack chopper, which even the US Army does not have. What is probably the world's biggest helicopter-training facility has been constructed at Isfahan in central Iran. It is staffed by US experts who, with their families, form a colony of 5,000. The Shah's navy includes nearly 40 destroyers, frigates and Hovercraft-some armed with missiles. (Time, March 3, 1975). Iran has been getting Phoenix and Maverick missiles, TOW-wire guided antitank missiles along with 500 US military experts to teach their use, (Christian Science Monitor, February 12, 1975), as well as six Spruance destroyers from US Litton Industries at a cost of \$110 million each. The Shah has for the past year maintained a force of 3,000 men in Dhofar, to prevent the PFLOAG from gaining control of Oman. The Shah has become the guarantor of the Sheikdoms, located between the Democratic Republic of Yemen and Dhofar, against any coup or revolution. In addition the Shah made offers of assistance to Kuwait. The Shah occupied four Arab islands located in the Strait of Hormuz - Abu Musa, Big Tomb, Little Tomb, Um Al-Ghanam - in order to secure the mouth of the Gulf. He is now consolidating this attempt by building new naval bases on the islands. (The island of Um Al-Ghanam was handed over to the Shah by Sultan Qabus of Oman for continued Iranian military and financial backing). An Iranian law lays claim to the right to inspect shipping passing through the Strait of Hormuz. The Shah is acting to expand his conquests and has stated that he will invade Oman if the revolution is victorious. The Shah's military concerns reach even farther, however. According to Iranian officers, he considers that Iran should play a role in protecting west-bound oil shipping beyond the Strait of Hormuz as far as the 10th parallel, at a point north of the Malagasy Republic, and would like to do the same for shipping bound eastward, were it not for India's objections. (Christian Science Monitor, February 12, 1975).

Saudi Arabia whose oil lifeline also runs through the Gulf has likewise turned to the US for arms. The Pentagon has advised the Saudis that they should substantially expand their armed forces over the next decade by adding a mechanized brigade, at least one tank battalion, an air force wing, attack helicopters and coastal-defense vessels.

The use of gendarmes has long been a policy of the imperialists. In this manner they can secure their interests, bolster their war economies and not endanger their "boys". The gendarme governments in Iran and Saudi Arabia, like their counterparts in South Vietnam, South Korea, Brazil, Chile, etc., maintain their control through terrorism, brutality, despotic control of the government, denial of all democratic rights, control and censorship of information and the maintenance of a backward society. The PFLOAG will be victorious because the demands for justice and freedom can not be stilled.



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